

# **FACT SHEET**

## **COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN**

### **Contact**

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### **Definition**

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a strategic plan that identifies specific wildland fire risks facing communities and neighborhoods and provides prioritized mitigation recommendations that are designed to reduce those risks.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans may address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, or structure protection – or all of the above.

### **Background**

The wildland urban interface (WUI) is the zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with wildland or vegetative fuels. The WUI zone poses tremendous risks to life, property, and infrastructure in associated communities and is one of the most dangerous and complicated situations that firefighters face. As more people move into the rural and forested areas, the number of large wildfires affecting homes and property has increased dramatically. The vast majority of the WUI area is found in the heavily populated eastern states. It is clear that addressing community safety within the WUI will require resources and policy solutions targeted at private land. Over 7000 Alabama communities have been identified as being at High to Moderate fire risk.

Following the extreme fire season of 2000 across the United States, a report regarding the impact of wildfires on communities and the environment brought the issue to the national level. Both the *National Fire Plan* and the *Ten-Year Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to*

*Communities* have placed a priority on a collaborative and local involvement in the effort to reduce the risk of wildfire events in the WUI.

In 2003, the *Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA)* described the minimum requirements for a CWPP:

1. Collaboration
2. Prioritized Fuel Reduction
3. Treatment of Structural Ignitability

The *HFRA* requires that three entities must mutually agree to the final contents of a CWPP:

- The applicable local government (i.e., counties or cities);
- The local fire department (s); and
- The state entity responsible for forest management (Alabama Forestry Commission)

The *National Fire Plan* provides millions of dollars annually for community fire planning, fuels reduction, prevention and utilization projects across the nation. In December, 2007 Alabama State Forester Linda Casey received a WUI grant through the U.S. Forest Service's State and Private Forestry competitive grant process. Priority for wildfire hazard mitigation funds from this grant will be given to those communities that have either a Community Wildfire Prevention Plan or Firewise certification. This grant will cover a three year period from FY 08- FY 10.

### **Why Have a CWPP?**

1. The HFRA gives communities the opportunity to define their respective wildland urban interface boundaries. Fifty per cent of federal funds for fuel reduction must be spent in these areas.
2. A CWPP gives communities an opportunity to influence the treatments used to reduce wildland fuels and restore ecosystem health.
3. Communities that develop a CWPP are given priority when funding opportunities for fuels reduction on private and public lands are available.
4. A CWPP determines strategies for reducing the risk wildfire pose to communities, critical watersheds, and natural resources.

## Goals and Objectives (examples)

1. Promote wildfire awareness and target fire prevention and safety information across at-risk communities.

- Coordinate community meetings to discuss fire related concerns with homeowners
- Distribute information on Firewise home site standards

2. Identify and reduce hazardous fuels and coordinate risk reduction strategies across the landscape

- Develop and utilize one common set of base information for risk assessment purposes.
- Promote landowner assistance programs
- Gather local knowledge of fire related concerns through public outreach
- Prioritize fuels reduction areas and projects

3. Promote cooperative emergency fire response for the protection of life, property, and natural resources

- Identify resource protection capability levels of all participating agencies
- Review interagency communications and suppression strategies for emergency fire response situations

4. Conduct monitoring and evaluation of plan progress at least annually

- Review goals and update plan as needed or as new information becomes available



## Summary and Checklist

- ✓ **Step One:** Convene Decisionmakers
  - Form a core team made up of representatives from the appropriate local governments, local fire authority, and state agency responsible for forest management.
- ✓ **Step Two:** Involve Federal Agencies
  - Identify and engage local representatives of the USFS and BLM.
  - Contact and involve other land management agencies as appropriate.
- ✓ **Step Three:** Engage Interested Parties
  - Contact and encourage active involvement in plan development from a broad range of interested organizations and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Step Four:** Establish a Community Base Map
  - Work with partners to establish a baseline map of the community that defines the community's WUI and displays inhabited areas at risk, forested areas that contain critical human infrastructure, and forest areas at risk for large-scale fire disturbance.
- ✓ **Step Five:** Develop a Community Risk Assessment
  - Work with partners to develop a community risk assessment that considers fuel hazards; risk of wildfire occurrence; homes, businesses, and essential infrastructure at risk; other community values at risk; and local preparedness capability.
  - Rate the level of risk for each factor and incorporate into the base map as appropriate.
- ✓ **Step Six:** Establish Community Priorities and Recommendations
  - Use the base map and community risk assessment to facilitate a collaborative community discussion that leads to the identification of local priorities for fuel treatment, reducing structural ignitability, and other issues of interest, such as improving fire response capability.
  - Clearly indicate whether priority projects are directly related to protection of communities and essential infrastructure or to reducing wildfire risks to other community values.
- ✓ **Step Seven:** Develop an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy
  - Consider developing a detailed implementation strategy to accompany the CWPP, as well as a monitoring plan that will ensure its long-term success.
- ✓ **Step Eight:** Finalize Community Wildfire Protection Plan
  - Finalize the CWPP and communicate the results to community and key partners.